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AUTHOR Davis, Louise E.; Turner, James S.
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ABSTRACT

Elementary preservice teachers in institutions certified by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) in the southern U.S. completed the Cultural Diversity Awareness Inventory. Results indicated that subjects exhibited cultural sensitivity in the areas of the culturally diverse family, cross-cultural communication, assessment, and creation of a multicultural environment using multicultural methods and materials. No statistically significant differences were found based on race; participation in a multicultural education course; or prior high school attendance at a private, public, or parochial institution. It is concluded that teacher education programs appear to be preparing preservice teachers to be culturally sensitive and separate multicultural courses added to the curriculum may not be needed. (Contains 52 references.) (JDD)

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AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CULTURAL SENSITIVITY LEVEL OF ELEMENTARY PRESERVICE TEACHERS

By

Louise E. Davis
University of Mississippi

James S. Turner
Mississippi State University

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INTRODUCTION

The demographic trends for the nation's public schools are changing for both students and teachers. The minority student population is increasing at the same time the racial composition of the teacher population is becoming more nonminority (Larke, 1990). Graham (1987) predicted that the population of school children will be 40% nonwhite by the year 2000. Graham stated that this could possibly lead to a cultural misunderstanding between the teachers and learners. He recommended that postsecondary educators take heed and establish firm commitments to programs in multicultural education that will prepare future teachers to deal effectively with cultural diversity. Haberman and Post (1990) believed there were few, if any, teacher education programs that were effectively meeting this vital need of preparing individuals for life in a multicultural society.

According to Larke (1990), teachers need to be more culturally sensitive to all students, regardless of diverse backgrounds. Therefore, the education of preservice teachers to become more culturally sensitive is a challenge that faces most teacher education programs. The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) defined the multicultural perspective as ". . . a recognition of (1) the social, political, and economic realities that individuals experience in

culturally diverse and complex human encounters and (2) the importance of culture, race, sex and gender, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, and exceptionalities in the education process" (NCATE, 1992 p. 65). Grottkau and Nickolai-Mays (1989) also suggested that the knowledge and experience of cultural pluralism was a vital ingredient of teacher education programs.

Rodriquez (1984) claimed that preservice teachers may be unprepared to meet the challenges of diversity they will face in their future classrooms. Olstad, Foster, and Wyman (1983) suggested that teachers who lack multicultural education in the preservice preparation program will not be prepared to deal with diversity in the classroom and will have low expectations of minority students. Sleeter and Grant (1987) defined multicultural education as an overall concept that embraces race, culture, language, social class, gender, and handicap.

The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education proposed the following goals for teacher education:

1. teaching values which support cultural diversity,
2. encouraging the expansion of existing cultures as well as their incorporation, into the mainstream,
3. supporting alternative life styles, and

4. encouraging multilingualism and multidialectism (AACTE, 1989, p.2).

Grottkau and Nickolai-Mays (1989) suggested that in-depth and prolonged exposure to cultural pluralism in preservice teacher education programs could bring about the hope that a cognitive and affective foundation would be developed in the preservice teacher. Pine and Hilliard (1990) recommended that preservice teachers be prepared to handle individual differences and incorporate them into creating a positive learning environment that enhances all children and their needs.

Need for the Study

A need is being created for elementary preservice teachers to be more culturally sensitive to groups of children with backgrounds different from their own. This is due to the fact that recent reports (Clabaugh, 1989; Graham, 1987; Haberman & Post, 1990) cited that the composition of the student population is becoming more minority while the teacher population is rapidly becoming nonminority. Historically, colleges of education have prepared their preservice teachers to work effectively with one group of students--that being the dominant culture of middle class.

Studies (Grottkau & Nickolai-Mays, 1989; Haberman & Post, 1990) have shown that preservice teachers who are

not trained in multicultural education have low expectations for minority students. If preservice teachers are not trained to be sensitive in meeting the needs of all learners, cultural misunderstandings could result between the teacher and learner (Graham, 1987). Teacher education programs must begin preparing preservice teachers for a multicultural society (Haberman & Post, 1990).

Research Questions To Be Answered

1. Are elementary preservice teachers culturally sensitive as a total group and in the following areas: (a) cultural awareness, (b) the culturally diverse family, (c) cross-cultural communication, (d) assessment, (e) creating a multicultural environment using multicultural methods and materials as measured by the Cultural Diversity Awareness Inventory?

2. Are there statistically significant differences between race, participation in multicultural education courses, and prior high school attendance at a private, public, or parochial institution as measured by items on the Cultural Diversity Awareness Inventory?

Limitations

The study was limited to elementary preservice teachers in NCATE accredited colleges of education within

the southern region of the United States. The findings, therefore, should not be generalized to other populations.

The Cultural Diversity Awareness Inventory (Henry, 1991) is an inventory that evaluates sensitivity toward children of diverse backgrounds. Therefore, it should be noted that sometimes, due to a person's self-perceptions of racial/ethnic issues, there may be slightly more bias than in other self-studies examining less sensitive issues. This could have an impact upon the findings of this study.

The measurement and meaning of the term cultural sensitivity, as used in this study, is bound by the instrument used in measuring the concept of cultural sensitivity. This limitation should be kept in mind as the reader interprets the findings of this study.

The Cultural Diversity Awareness Inventory (Henry, 1991) was created using ordinal data. A limitation of this study was the assignment of number values to replace word values in order to create interval/ratio data. This method allowed inferential statistical procedures to be performed in this study.

Definition of Terms

The following terms were defined as they are used in this study:

Cultural diversity: Individual differences in race, culture, values, and beliefs (Kendall, 1983, p. 7).

Culture: All of the values and belief systems, ways of thinking, acting, and responding (Kendall, 1983, p.13).

Cultural pluralism: The recognition of individual differences and cultural equality (Ogbu, 1992, p. 6).

Cultural sensitivity: The attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors toward students of other cultures (Larke, 1990, p.24).

Multicultural education: A curriculum which teaches respect for others' cultures and values as well as their own (Kendall, 1983, p. 3).

Preservice teacher: A student who has been admitted to teacher education in the college of education and who is currently student teaching.

Teacher education: The program of study in a college of education which prepares future teachers.

Prior high school attendance: Attendance at and graduation from a high school either in a private school setting, a public school setting, or a parochial school setting.

Summary of Results

1. In the area of cultural awareness, all mean scores were above the standard error of measurement which indicated preservice teachers were culturally sensitive. The specific survey item "Surprised at minority

participation in traditional non-minority school activities indicated the highest mean score of 4.04. The survey item "Prefer to work with students who share my culture" had the lowest mean score of sensitivity of 3.25.

2. Elementary preservice teachers were culturally sensitive in the area of the culturally diverse family with an overall mean score of 3.62. The specific survey item, "Necessary to include parent input in program planning," indicated that this item had the highest mean sensitivity score of 4.27. The item with the lowest mean sensitivity score of 2.91 was "During initial meetings, teachers should ask families their preference for ethnic identification" which indicated that elementary preservice teachers were the least culturally sensitive on this particular item of the survey.

3. Elementary preservice teachers were culturally sensitive, with an overall mean score of 3.57, in the area of Cross Cultural Communication. The item with the highest mean sensitivity score of 4.04 was "Regular curriculum should include ESL for non-English speaking children." The item with the lowest mean sensitivity score of 3.0 was "Students' spoken language should be corrected by modeling without explanation." The preservice teachers were found to be neutral on this item of the CDAI.

4. Data indicated that preservice teachers were culturally sensitive in the area of Assessment with an overall mean score of 3.27. The item with the highest mean sensitivity score of 3.43 was "Give standardized or intelligence test in child's dominant language." Preservice teachers were not culturally sensitive with item "Adaptations in standardized assessments." It was reported with the lowest mean sensitivity score of 2.99. The preservice teachers were found to be neutral on this item of the CDAI.

5. Elementary preservice teachers were culturally sensitive in the area of "Creating a multicultural environment using multicultural methods and materials" with an overall mean score of 3.85. The specific survey item of "Student job assignments should rotate regularly and equally in job assignments" held the highest mean sensitivity score of 4.57. The survey item with the lowest mean sensitivity score of 3.30 was "Displays and materials should reflect at least three cultural groups".

6. Data indicated that the overall sensitivity mean score of preservice teachers was 3.60. The area with the highest overall mean sensitivity score of 3.85 was Creating a Multicultural Environment Using Multicultural Methods and Materials. The area with the lowest overall mean sensitivity score of 3.27 was Assessment.

7. The second question asked if there were statistically significant differences in the cultural diversity sensitivity between race, participation in multicultural education courses, and prior high school attendance at a private, public, or parochial institution as measured by items on the Cultural Diversity Awareness Inventory. Based on the data from the multivariate analysis of variance, no statistically significant differences were found at the .05 level of significance between any subgroups of the three independent variables individually and the 28 items on the Cultural Diversity Awareness Inventory.

Conclusions

1. In this study, elementary preservice teachers were shown to be culturally sensitive as indicated by the total overall culturally sensitive mean score ($\underline{M}$ = 3.60). This finding is inconsistent with the idea that major reform is needed in teacher education for multiculturalism to become genuine (Banks, 1988; Kalectaca, 1974; Ramsey et al., 1989).

2. Elementary preservice teachers exhibited the highest overall mean score of sensitivity in the area of Creating a Multicultural Environment Using Multicultural Methods and Materials. These results support a recent study by Larke (1990) who used the CDAI instrument and

found that 84.3% of the elementary preservice teachers were willing to accommodate for diversity by adjusting their particular curriculum.

3. The individual item on the Cultural Diversity Awareness Inventory with the highest mean score indicating cultural sensitivity was "Each child should be involved in a regular rotating schedule for job assignments" in the area of Creating A Multicultural Environment Using Multicultural Methods and Materials. These results match those reported by Larke (1990) when she found 88.2% of the elementary preservice teachers believed that the student job assignments should rotate regularly. In addition, Wynn (1974) suggested that one of the competencies that preservice teachers should be able to demonstrate is the ability to recognize each student's desire to be able to do something and to attain success doing it.

4. Of all the individual items on the Cultural Diversity Awareness Inventory, the lowest mean score indicating the lowest level of sensitivity was "In asking families of diverse cultures how they wish to be identified" in the area of Culturally Diverse Family. This finding is consistent with studies that teachers have difficulties in establishing successful relationships between minority families, children, and themselves (Bennett, 1986; Brownlee, 1989).

5. The ethnicity of the preservice teacher made no difference in the cultural sensitivity when answering the items on the Cultural Diversity Awareness Inventory. Contrary to this finding, Rashid's study (1990) found that African-Americans and Caucasians differed in their teacher perceptions and attitudes toward multicultural education. African-Americans saw a greater need for multicultural education.

6. Participation in a multicultural education course made no difference in the cultural sensitivity of the preservice teacher in this study. The possibility exists that separate courses in multicultural education may not be needed for elementary teacher education programs due to multiple cultural experiences. Rather, multiculturalism should permeate throughout the curriculum (ASCD, 1992; Lopez & Vogel, 1979; NCATE, 1992).

7. Whether a preservice teacher attended a public, private, or parochial school made no difference in the cultural sensitivity of the preservice teacher. Contrary to this finding, Lopez and Vogel (1979) stated that educational institutions are an integral part of the way attitudes and values are formed in young peoples' lives. Students' perceptions of responsibilities and rights of adult life are shaped within the institutional framework.

8. The level of sensitivity was not affected by the interaction of ethnicity, participation in a multicultural education course, or prior high school attendance.

Implications

Certain implications drawn from the findings of this study are suggested for the teacher education institutions.

1. Teacher education programs in this study seem to be promoting sensitivity to cultural diversity within their programs.

2. Participation in field-based or clinical experiences is an essential component of promoting cultural sensitivity. This educational need is supported by the Holmes Group (Grant, 1991) and by NCATE (1992).

3. Separate multicultural courses added to the curriculum may not be needed.

4. Teacher education programs appear to be preparing preservice teachers to be culturally sensitive in creating a multicultural learning environment. Preservice teachers are being taught that the creation and management of the learning environment is their responsibility. However, focus on working with the culturally diverse family is an area that needs attention. Also, in the area of assessment, preservice teachers need to be made more

culturally sensitive in adapting the child's needs to standardized assessments.

5. Teacher education programs need to establish to what degree sensitivity should be reached to be adequate with their preservice teachers.

6. Considering the percentage of minorities and nonminorities in the study and the finding that the ethnicity of the preservice teacher made no difference leads one to believe the teacher education programs are assisting minority and nonminority elementary preservice teachers to be culturally sensitive.

Recommendations

The analyses of data collected for this study indicated that further research studies should be conducted in the following areas:

1. Additional studies should be done in regions other than the southeast.

2. A similar study should be conducted before preservice teachers enter the teacher education program and after they complete the program.

3. Replications of this study should be conducted following the same subjects after they have been in the field for a year.

4. A similar study should be conducted using the cooperating teachers in the field.

5. It is recommended that a study of this nature be conducted using a comparison of secondary preservice teachers and elementary preservice teachers.

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